

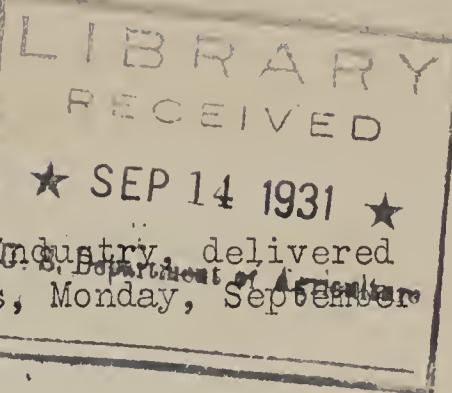
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THE GARDEN CALENDAR

A radio talk by W. R. Beattie, Bureau of Plant Industry, delivered through station WRC and 43 other associate NBC stations, Monday, September 1, 1931.

Hello Farm and Home Hour Folks: At this time last week I was in Cincinnati, Ohio, attending the annual convention of the Vegetable Growers Association of America. Nineteen States and Canada were represented in this convention, the representatives having come from as far west as the State of Washington and East as far as Connecticut and Massachusetts, and from Florida to Minnesota and Canada. The members of this organization are representative vegetable growers from all over the country and they are the people who grow fresh vegetables for the use of those of you who live in the cities. Once a year the individual growers and the delegates from the various State and local vegetable growers associations get together to discuss their problems and to hear from the college and experiment station workers regarding progress that is being made in the solution of the various problems.

The problems of the fruit and vegetable growers are of two classes or groups, the one of production and the other of marketing. Both phases of the industry was brought out during the discussions but from what I heard at the convention the problems connected with the selling of the produce after it is grown outweigh those of production. It is true that there are very serious problems connected with the growing of good fruits and vegetables but despite all difficulties the growers can in most cases grow more than they can sell to advantage.

One of the most interesting discussions presented on vegetable production problems was that of soil acidity, or as stated in the program, "Relation of Soil Reaction to Growth of Vegetables," presented by Mr. H.H. Zimmerly of the Virginia Truck Experiment Station at Norfolk, Virginia. Mr. Zimmerly has given years of careful study to this problem of soil reactions and in the course of his talk he showed by means of lantern slides how the various vegetable crops respond favorably or unfavorably to the least change in soil acidity. I could not go into the details in the few moments allotted me for this talk, except to say that the determination of the acidity of any piece of soil is a comparatively simple matter and that many of the county agents are in position to either make these determinations or have them made. The State Experiment Stations are doing work on soil reactions and lime requirement so are in position to advise growers what crops and soils need additional lime or what ones require a more acid soil.

After all I think the problems of marketing were uppermost in the minds of many of the growers who attended the convention. On all sides you heard group discussions of selling methods and of markets. In this connection we had an excellent address by Mr. Charles S. Wilson, member of the Federal Farm Board, on the work of the Federal Farm Board in Fruits and Vegetables. Mr. Wilson urged the formation of selling cooperatives as a means of marketing the products of the fruit and vegetable farms. A number of the speakers emphasized the great need for better methods of grading and packing fruits and vegetables for the market and more definite standardization of both product and packages.

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In connection with this convention there was a rather large exhibit of the latest implements and machinery used by vegetable growers. There were garden tractors, seed drills and cultivators, vegetable washing machinery, greenhouse equipment, insecticides and equipment for applying them. Seedsmen were there with exhibits of the choicest vegetables. There was an exhibit of vegetables by members of the 4H Boy's Clubs, contests between celery growers and cauliflower growers for the best exhibit in their lines, and a lot more attractive features.

Now don't think that this convention was all work and no play for the evening of the first day was spent on a boat trip on the Ohio River during which we stopped at a park where a dinner was served to over a thousand hungry vegetable growers, their wives and children. On one evening we had an entertainment given by the ladies and one day was spent visiting the gardens around Cincinnati. At noon we stopped at the place of one of the gardeners and on the great lawn under the shade of beautiful trees was spread tables to seat nearly one thousand people, and what a feed that was. One of the features of this wonderful dinner was the serving of Golden Bantam corn steamed with the shucks on it. Another feature was the splendid cantaloupes grown by one of the members. Pretty nearly the whole dinner was produced right on nearby farms and like the boy we ate and ate and ate.

Time is too short for me to tell you more about this wonderful get-together of the vegetable growers but I for one had a good time and I wouldn't have missed it for five times what my trip cost me. I think it would be a good thing if we could have more of these meetings together of kindred spirits and joining in a free discussion of our problems but at the same time getting a lot of fun out of it. Incidentally I gained the idea that while vegetable growers the country over have had a pretty close time of it the past two seasons, none of those that I came in contact with seemed to be on the road to the poorhouse although they have had to shave the corners pretty closely. Many of these growers are suffering from a burden of increased taxation due to the rise in prices of the land they are working upon on account of nearness to cities. The motor truck has greatly increased the distances over which perishable vegetables can be marketed locally, and by the way, I also gained the impression that the growers who have built up their own local markets and who sell direct to consumer customers or to their local retail dealers are having the least worry about finding a profitable market.

A lot of us have been overlooking opportunities right at our own doors and I have found that if you have something to sell better tell your neighbors before you go hunting a distant market. Very often your local dealer will handle your products on a very small margin of profit, at least that has been the experience of many of the vegetable growers as reported at their convention.